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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4052
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2636
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2758
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1235
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2027
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000129

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B.WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2019

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER TSVANGIRAI

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) The Ambassador today called on prime minister Morgan Tsvangirai. Tsvangirai was accompanied by deputy prime minister Arthur Mutambara, minister for state in the prime minister's office Gordon Moyo, and advisor Ian Makone. Tsvangirai expressed the utmost confidence in the ability of the new government to work; he stated he would not have joined the government if he had "one iota of doubt" that it would not succeed.

12. (C) Tsvangirai noted it was important to get past diversionary issues such as the continuing detention of MDC and civil society detainees and the detention of Roy Bennett (septel). He said he would be discussing their situation with the Joint Operation and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) tomorrow, and would urge the immediate release of all detainees. The justice system could be allowed to run its course, but the object was immediate release, even if on stringent bail conditions. In addition to meeting with JOMIC, Tsvangirai said he would instruct the Minister of Justice to instruct the Attorney General to support release.

13. (C) The Ambassador requested that Tsvangirai also raise the case of detained USAID driver Frank Muchirahondo, underscoring that he had been arrested on trumped-up charges and that his continued detention, which had frightened other Locally Employed Staff, could potentially impair our ability to provide food assistance. Tsvangirai promised to raise the issue.

14. (C) Turning to assistance, Tsvangirai acknowledged the need for the new government to demonstrate progress before receiving assistance, but also noted the need to demonstrate to the Zimbabwean people that it was acting on their behalf. Without disclosing the source, he said that today the GOZ had paid members of the military R1000 and hoped to do the same tomorrow with teachers. (COMMENT: The fact Tsvangirai denoted payment in Rand would indicate the money came from the South African government. END COMMENT.) The Ambassador responded that the USG wanted to see the new government survive and prosper. While we would continue to provide

humanitarian assistance, there was skepticism about technical and developmental assistance to a government that included Robert Mugabe as president. Such assistance would ultimately be predicated on political and economic reform; important first steps would be the immediate release of the detainees, including Roy Bennett and Frank Muchirahondo. Tsvangirai agreed these steps were necessary to begin to establish credibility.

15. (C) Tsvangirai participated today in his first cabinet meeting. He said he had "instructed" the foreign minister to talk with the Ambassador, and to start thinking about reengagement with the U.S. and EU countries. He commented the new government was not ZANU-PF or MDC but was a new, transitional government.

COMMENT

16. (C) Tsvangirai is supremely confident the "all-inclusive" government can work. He does not seem fazed by the continued detention of his aides and supporters, or the arrest of Roy Bennett immediately after his inauguration, treating these events as part of a rear-guard process orchestrated by ZANU-PF hawks; and expressing confidence that this will soon be set right. There is a great desire by the international community to help the new government, but continuing detentions; disobeyed court orders e.g., refusing to allow hospitalization for several detainees; and ZANU-PF efforts to

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stack the cabinet with unagreed-upon ministers, do not inspire the confidence that Tsvangirai readily admits is necessary. The next few days will be important in determining whether there is a basis for Tsvangirai's optimism.

MCGEE